

**From:** [Blanco, Arturo](#)  
**To:** [Gray, David](#); [Coleman, Sam](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: EJ Group Conference Call  
**Date:** Wednesday, September 6, 2017 5:05:14 AM

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Call perspectives

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Blanco, Arturo" <[Blanco.Arturo@epa.gov](mailto:Blanco.Arturo@epa.gov)>  
**Date:** September 6, 2017 at 5:03:46 AM CDT  
**To:** Mary Naquin <[m.j.naquin@informedfutures.com](mailto:m.j.naquin@informedfutures.com)>  
**Cc:** "Flores-Gregg, Paula" <[flores.paula@epa.gov](mailto:flores.paula@epa.gov)>  
**Subject:** Re: EJ Group Conference Call

Mary Jane,

It is your third party neutral perspective and extensive experience with communities in the ship channel I believe provide important insight to the work we are trying to do for the benefit of everyone. I appreciate your sensitivity in withholding comments during the call and sending us your thoughts instead. I also think opening a communication channel for those that otherwise believe no one is listening is a vital element in trying to strike a balance as we purport to best serve all, especially being considerate of those that are typically disadvantaged beyond the temporal impacts of life threatening events such as Harvey.

As I see it, your community work interfacing with industry, while not EJ focused, adds value to the effect of wanting to work more effectively together. I hope the abundance of good will brought about by Harvey is contagious long run, as we work and discern to bridge sources of help to environmental health challenges together with sources of environmental health concern regardless of all the biases.

I appreciate the work you do, thank you for joining us and I think you should continue to take part on the calls.

Arturo

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 5, 2017, at 9:49 PM, Mary Naquin <[m.j.naquin@informedfutures.com](mailto:m.j.naquin@informedfutures.com)> wrote:

Paula,

Thank you and Arturo for including me in today's conference call with the Environmental Justice community. I was able to listen as I set up the

coffee cart for clinic service at MD Anderson. I volunteer every Tuesday morning, so was not fully attending the conversation, but did get a good sense of the discussion and heard many of the concerns and requests that came your way. I did hear some speakers much better than others!

General Honore came through loud and clear!

I appreciated everyone's comments - it was enlightening to hear the concerns and perspectives. I work as a 3<sup>rd</sup> party neutral for the petrochemical industry, and don't interact frequently with the EJ activists and organizers, so the call was informative. For the most part, the EJ organizers aren't residents of the areas where my community groups live. And yes, many of those neighborhoods qualify as minority/disadvantaged areas in the EJ sense.

I didn't feel comfortable about contributing during the call, even if I could have. I am not part of the EJ community and strive to maintain a neutral stance as I work with a variety of groups. Your callers were unlikely to appreciate my input since they view my role as "pro industry" -- I am paid for many of my services by industry clients to provide a forum for open dialogue with their community neighbors.

At any rate, I believe I have a perspective to offer to your section of the EPA, and while not a priority for your EJ group, it lends insight to the agency in the days ahead. There is so much before you, and I understand your resources must be distributed with thought to best use and most need.

I am not familiar with the community dynamics in the Corpus Christi, Rockport area. I do work in Beaumont... and know its EJ areas. Here is what I see/think/offer -- primarily for Houston:

The City of Houston is well equipped to take care of business.

Contributions are pouring in from many places, and Houston has the infrastructure and systems to sort, prioritize and assign help where it is needed. It has the resources, capacity, man(woman)power and know-how. The smaller communities are less able to help themselves, test water, air, etc. or to mitigate serious issues. But they also have fewer hazardous sources....

Most of the severely flooded areas in Houston were the affluent neighborhoods, not EJ communities -- southeast Houston along Braes Bayou, Kingwood, and the Memorial Villages on the west side of the city are still flooded and in disarray. Reservoir releases flooded homes in Briar Forest, along Gessner and in the Memorial Villages. Many middle class neighborhoods also flooded across the city and county. They will have resources and private insurance to return to life ... when the water goes down and inspectors step in.

The EJ areas in Houston were impacted, but not as severely as other areas overall. Greens Bayou and North Channel flooded, but I am not knowledgeable enough to comment. The Houston Ship Channel industry was shut down, and few issues were occurred to my knowledge ...

ExxonMobil, and Arkema certainly, but exceptions more than the rule. There was flaring as plants came down...but it was not unnecessarily prolonged. The EJ communities live in areas that are long suffering from neglect, poverty and poor schools, but not from necessarily from Harvey's impact. NGOs with resources and grants have already been testing water, air, etc. and will do more. Prioritize your resources with that in mind. I didn't know there were Colonias on the edges of Houston, but given the fears Hispanics in the current environment, they will certainly need support but more than that related to environmental needs. At any rate, the outskirts of Houston are far less subject to industrial hazards, and are more harmed by racism, political agendas, a lack of education, language and more. Rely on those who know more than I do!

The focus on Super Fund sites in southeast Texas, and in Houston is important. Assuring those who live near those places comes with multiple inspections, quality data and good community communications about what is found. An action plan should be ready, and a good communication program.

I was surprised to hear the misinformation and biases of some who spoke this morning. They seemed not to know how agencies work, about the procedures they must follow, or how emergency managers or their offices are charged with safeguarding the public. There was plenty of blaming to go around.

I assume this was meant to be a time for EPA to listen, and not for correcting. People who are emotional and angry can't hear, absorb, or learn, but they seem not to want to understand any other than their own opinions. It is concerning to me having observed how people came together to save lives and property regardless of color, religion, political views, sexual orientation, and place where they live. No questions asked, no measures of past offences, no rancor or grudges. They came from everywhere simply to help. Leaders stepped up, set a path, established a system and boundaries, communicated well, and people followed. The Harvey related events have brought more people together in rescues, shelters, collaboration, resource sharing and coordination, and belief in the future than anything I have seen in over 50 years in this area/state/city. Necessity inspired, stimulated and encouraged people to achieve a shared vision of recovery and doing better in the coming days than anything I've witnessed. Of course, Harvey was a freak of nature and the rains were no one's fault, so there is no entity to blame which makes it easier to unify.

I wonder if the Twin Towers/ 9-11 had a similar effect "togetherness effect" on the New Yorkers, and if so, how long it lasted. Is it still part of the heart of that city, and if not why did it dissipate? Could it be that separate agendas could play a part?

With due consideration for an EJ focus, this is a time to work as one community, in spite of differences, histories, or slights. The current

divisive environment in our nation makes this even more difficult, and I am concerned that division is contagious. To divide the community into groups with separate demands seems to minimize the unification that lifts all boats, especially when we now have a chance to do better. With deep concern for those who have suffered more and longer, my thought is for the EPA and the EJ organizations to work with non-EJ groups at the local level to leverage strengths and to minimize rhetoric that is strident or carries tones of antagonism, and that continues to divide people who share the same air, water and place more than it brings them together. I've gone on too long. Please let me know if I should continue to take part in these calls. I don't want to interfere in a dialogue that needs to happen, but could learn by listening. I am not sure that my presence would be welcome or my perspectives valued. And I am hesitant to speak out given my association with industry.

I sincerely appreciate being included.

Mary Jane

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